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General and complete disarmament

Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them

Report of the Secretary-General**

Summary

The present report summarizes the activities undertaken at the national, subregional and regional levels in Africa in response to requests made by States for United Nations assistance in their efforts to curb the illicit trade in and to collect and dispose of small arms.

* A/57/50/Rev.1.

** The late submission is due to rearrangement and harmonization of the text on account of the overlap among three different General Assembly resolutions on small arms.

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I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 56/24 U of 29 November 2001, entitled "Assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them", the General Assembly encouraged cooperation between State organs, international organizations and civil society in combating the illicit traffic in small arms and supporting operations to collect such arms from the subregions of Africa. It invited the Secretary-General and those States and organizations that are in a position to do so to provide assistance to States for curbing the illicit traffic in small arms and collecting them and called upon the international community to provide technical and financial support to such endeavours. It also requested the Secretary-General to continue to consider the matter and to report to the Assembly at its fifty-seventh session on the implementation of the resolution.

2. The present report is submitted in compliance with that request. It provides an overview of recent activities undertaken during the period from July 2001 to June 2002 at the subregional and regional levels to address the threat posed by illicit small arms proliferation in Africa, and of efforts to collect and dispose of such weapons.

II. Requests from Member States for United Nations assistance

A. Kenya

3. At the request of the Government of Kenya, the group of interested States in practical disarmament measures[1] supported the dispatch of a United Nations fact-finding mission to that country in July/August 2001 in order to assist national authorities and the signatories of the Nairobi Declaration on the Problem of the Proliferation of Illicit Small Arms and Light Weapons in the Great Lakes Region and the Horn of Africa (the Nairobi Declaration) to identify effective measures to address the threat posed by illicit small arms and light weapons in the region, including the formulation and implementation of appropriate programmes for the collection and destruction of such weapons.

4. The mission was led by the Department for Disarmament Affairs, and included representatives from the Department of Political Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme, and the United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa. In its recommendations, the mission underscored the importance of ensuring the effective stockpile management and security of legally held weapons and of strengthening the cooperation between national authorities, regional mechanisms and relevant civil society actors in the campaign against the proliferation of illicit small arms. The mission also recommended the continued collection of data and information on the specific manifestations of the small arms problem throughout the region in order to facilitate the formulation of a comprehensive, integrated and coordinated response.

B. Sierra Leone

5. Pursuant to paragraph 20 of the twelfth report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Mission to Sierra Leone (S/2001/1195), an inter-agency disarmament assessment mission to Sierra Leone and neighbouring Liberia and Guinea took place from 14 to 28 April 2002. The principal objective of the mission was to evaluate the effectiveness of the disarmament exercise that was conducted in Sierra Leone from May 2001 and January 2002. Despite an initial emphasis on disarmament and demobilization, the mission focused more on the reintegration, reconciliation and repatriation aspects of the process then under way in Sierra Leone. The mission report made a number of recommendations and identified some key lessons learned from the disarmament process in Sierra Leone that could be applied in support of other peacekeeping mandates.

III. Other activities to provide assistance to States

6. The United Nations Regional Centre for Peace and Disarmament in Africa undertook a number of activities to provide substantive and technical support to Member States of the African region in the

[1] For activities in other regions or subregions supported by the group of interested States in practical disarmament measures, see the report of the Secretary-General on consolidation of peace through practical disarmament measures (A/57/210).

implementation of the programme of action adopted by the United Nations Conference on the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All Its Aspects during the period under review. The activities included, inter alia, the provision of training in small arms control to security sector personnel of the 10 countries of the Great Lakes region; assistance to the Government of Guinea-Bissau in setting up a programme to collect and destroy illegal weapons; support to the Government of Togo in the organization of a ceremonial bonfire (Flame of Peace); and support for the creation of a subregional civil society network to combat the proliferation of small arms, based in Accra.

IV. Conclusion

7. While it is true that the primary responsibility for addressing the threat posed by the illicit trade in small arms and light weapons rests with the affected States themselves, it is important that the international community continue to provide those States with technical and financial assistance in order to strengthen further their ability to curb the illicit traffic in small arms and to collect them.